HARAMBEE FLAME

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LOOKING TO REACH MORE PEOPLE

The Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization publishes the FLAME once per month and distributes approximately 200 copies. About half of these copies go to persons and organizations outside the penitentiary, while the others are distributed in here. We are of the view that this newsletter is worthwhile and contains information and perspectives that can be of use to American-born Afrikans whether we happen to be in the physical prison or outside of it.

If there are those of you on the outside who share the view that the FLAME is a worthwhile publication, are you willing to aid us in getting our paper to more folks? No we are not asking for money, though we can certainly use it. Rather, we are asking that, if your organization or church has its own publication, you make the FLAME a part of that publication.

What we are asking is that each month you have copies of the FLAME printed along with your own publication and send it out as an insert to the persons on your mailing list. This would enable us to reach a lot more people while cutting our postage costs and possibly without increasing yours(The FLAME rarely runs more than four pages long, two sheets.).

If your church or organization would like to aid us in this way, simply write us, advising as to the time(s) of the month that your publication is printed. Your help in this would be greatly appreciated.

Harambee Afro-Cultural Org.
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-David L. Rice/Editor

PROTECTING OURSELVES

You, the readership of FLAME, frequently find reference in this publication to yourselves/ourselves as being Afrikan and to the Afrikan continent, its pre-colonial societies, culture, etc. That such reference is made and information provided is not without purpose. In the first place, you are called "Afrikan" because that's what you are. You are not some freakish phenomenon, something that just happened to spring up out of the soil of America. Your history did not begin with slavery but long before that and long away from this land. For you to deny your Afrikanness is for you to deny yourself and, more tragically, to place yourself in a time and place as a veritable tumbleweed moved about at random by the winds of circumstances over which you have no control.

But it is not enough for you to know that you are Afrikan. You must also know of the concepts encased in Afrikanness. For terms are not just terms. They are ideas, ideas that encompass values. If you are Afrikan, then you have a certain frame of reference, a system of values by which to guide your life. If, on the other hand, you deny who you are and take claim to being what you are not, you take on an alien value system. In this land and at this time, you are having problems. You can not deal with them because you either have no frame of reference or an alien one, one designed for you by those in whose interest it is to keep you cut off from yourself.

There is unemployment and underemployment for you to deal with, sub-standard housing, inadequate political representation, etc. And what tool has America given you to deal with these and other problems? The tool is the American

INFORMATION OF INTEREST

-35% of Black households in the U.S. are headed by females, up from 28% in 1970. Only 4% of Black households are headed by men; 61% are jointly headed....Average median income for Black males is $7, 031 and for Black females, $4,772 according to 1974 figures....Of the almost half-a-million interracial marriages that are in existence today, at least 76% involve the Black male, not female.

(from N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS)

-Under President Ford, Black colleges received 5.2% of the federal funds to educational institutions. Under the Carter administration, this figure dropped to 4.8% and down again to approximately 4.1%.

(from THE BLACK COLLEGIAN)

-Some 35% of food stamp recipients are responsible for small children or disabled people, while another 32% are themselves disabled. Of the recipients, 87% have incomes below the poverty line and 58% have incomes below $300 a month. Two-thirds of such households have no car. 55% of the recipients are white, 33% are black, and the rest mainly Latino.

(from THE GUARDIAN)

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PROTECTING OURSELVES(cont.)

value system, one that exhorts you to go after what you can get without regard to the needs of others. The use of this tool has meant what? It has meant that you are probably inclined to exploit or otherwise run over others whom, like you, are Afrikan and probably poor. You are inclined to do this particularly if you have a position of status that enables you to exercise whatever semblance of authority which the System allows you.

It is not, however, only you who happen to be politicians, business managers, etc. who are inclined to exploit your own. It is also you who happen to be poor, probably male, and probably young. America has told you what it is to be a man, that you must have things, symbols of prosperity. This same America has designed for you an educational system which prepares you to take your place at the bottom of the economic heap where access to the means of obtaining the material symbols is cut off.

So how are you to be a man? How do you resolve the contradiction of accepting Madison Avenue's definition of manhood and Wall Street's imposition of severe restrictions upon your person as to the fulfillment of that definition in your life? If you have no job or an inadequate one, how are you to be a man? You are in the position of having to ask such questions only because you and your community have not knowledge of self, are without awareness of a value system that was yours before you came to this land.

Even though the frustrations tied up with being poor in the land of plenty make crimes against American-born Afrikans by American-born Afrikans understandable, they make them no less regrettable and tragic. And the fact that whites in the U.S. commit crimes against each other does not make this problem in black communities any less serious.

It is because we do not know that, according to our <u>original</u> value system, individualism does not take precedence over the community and its needs that we are so quick to rob from each other, to pimp each other, to fight with and kill each other. It is because we are dealing with our current poverty and powerlessness out of an alien(American) frame of reference that we are so ready to either exploit each other or refuse to share our skills and resources with each other.

-the editor

THE EXTENDED FAMILY IN AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

(The following is excerpted from an article entitled "African and Afro-American Family Structure: A Comparison" by Niara Sudarkasa which appeared in the Nov./Dec. issue of BLACK SCHOLAR MAGAZINE. The excerpt is presented here in hopes that it offer some possibilities for our addressing certain types of problems being experienced in our families and communities.)

"By having the power to withdraw sources of emotional support, which might be done, for example, by ostracizing the recalcitrant members of the family, the leadership of the extended family was able to serve as a basic law enforcement agency. The strength of the extended family explains in part the absence of elaborate policing mechanisms and penal institutions in precolonial Africa. Moreover, through the use of arbitration and diplomacy, the male and female elders in the extended family were able to settle many disputes without recourse to the courts that did exist.....The extended family provided social security in the form of companionship, counseling, and emotional reinforcement for the society's youth, adults, and aged. Africans did not subscribe to the view that "true" emotional gratification, satisfaction, and support comes primarily through relationships based on sexuality. In fact, husbands and wives looked to their wider extended family relations as well as to each other(sometimes more than to each other) for companionate, gratifying, and satisfying relationships. The extended family also provided care for the infirm as well as the emotionally or mentally disabled, with the burden of these responsibilities being shared among various members of the units."

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. You have information, views, etc. .
. Share them with us! .
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BLACK WOMEN & BLACK MEN: AT THE CROSSROADS

(This excerpt is taken from an article by Robert Staples entitled "Beyond The Black Family: The Trend Toward Singlehood," which appeared in Vol. 3, #3 of WESTERN JOURNAL OF BLACK STUDIES.)

"...these women(Black college graduates) will accept nothing less than a mate of similar educational level. This is a function of their acceptance of Euro-Americans' emphasis on status homogeneity as the basis for marriage....The middle-class Black male also falls victim to the lure of Euro-American values in his standards for a wife. As he rises into the middle class, acquires some power and income, his standards begin to mirror those of his white counterpart. What he wants is a woman who fits into the Euro-American definition of womanhood, dependent and submissive. But the majority of Black women did not have these role models as children, nor did the imperatives of Black survival allow for them to acquire such traits....Hence, the crisis of the Black family stems from more than poverty alone. It is also due to the problem of acculturation, the acceptance of values-alien values-which do not conform to the structural context of Black society. Despite all that was said about the lack of acculturation being the major cause of Black family weakness, it is becoming all too clear that Blacks' unique cultural moorings were functional for their situation. Now, Blacks stand at the crossroads of a major decision about which way they will proceed to order their lives. Will it be the organic family unit built on a Black ethos, or the materialism and individualism of Euro-American culture? Whatever that decision may be, Black people should not be deluded into believing that the consequences are individual ones. The future of the race may be at stake."

(Untitled)

In the aftermath of the storm,
I venture out to seek,
search with high hopes
of catching a glimpse
of what used to be;
things that have brought pleasure
in one way or another...
memories now...
bleak...
scurrying about hiding then
from conscious realities,
coming back again
from behind stealing pinches
on the walls of the subconscious,
and daring that I should turn to look

Blowing dust irritates the eye,
obstructing vision,
clouding concise thoughts
so that I dance in the dark,
running,
stumbling
into the stone edifice
of the watchtower,
looking up in fear...
should I run?...
it survived the storm just as I,
for as far as the eye can see...
nothing...
destruction...
the winds are plotting their
second assault with the clouds,
and I;
the watchtower,
saw it all
from beginning...
to end...

I will survive again,
there's plenty of room inside.
Lightning warrants decisions...
the sky darkens again...
but I;
the watchtower,
grins as the tumbleweeds take flight.

Jimi Wayne

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. The article, "Protecting Our- .
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SOMEBODY

I WANT TO LET GO WITH SOMEBODY
I WANT SOMEBODY TO LET GO WITH ME

I WANT TO NEED SOMEBODY
I WANT SOMEBODY TO NEED ME

I WANT TO LEAN ON SOMEBODY
I WANT SOMEBODY TO PLEASE LEAN ON ME

OH GOD! I GOT TO FIND SOMEBODY
BUT IS IT UP TO ME?

I WANT TO SHARE WITH SOMEBODY
HEY! WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE SHARE WITH ME?

I WANT TO CRY WITH SOMEBODY
DO YOU KNOW WHAT CRYING MEANS TO ME?

LIFE AINT NOTHING BUT SHOWING
WITH SOMEBODY
ABOUT GLOWING WITH SOMEBODY

I SAY SOMETIMES, WHERE IN THIS WORLD
IS ME SOMEBODY, IS ME SOMEBODY?

Brenda Johnson

ATLANTA

a stick pokes the underbrush
the chink of bones rattles the morning
a little boy's cap is soggy from
the paste of dew and dust
a shirt
size: small
lies knotted in the fingers
of winter's brittle twigs
other searchers rush to this
too common scene to choke on horror
gag
because the truth does not go down easy
because the youthful skull
does not go down easy
because the child's rack of bones
does not go down easy
it all hangs in the throat for a time
like stubborn phlegm
as the searchers' eyes turn away
while the police pack the remains
in evidence bags marked:
exhibit X
exhibit X
exhibit X.....

David L. Rice